

Vietnam war. Third, to protect the Americans that navigated the B-52s and the jets to bomb North Vietnam.”

After the war, thousands of displaced Hmong refugees were obliged to flee Laos. They fled into Thailand, to countries in Europe, and—in many cases—to the United States. My State of Rhode Island is proud to have had many settle and build their lives in our communities.

The Hmong Veterans’ Service Recognition Act passed into law this year, finally allowing naturalized Hmong- and Laotian-American veterans to be buried in U.S. national cemeteries. I am grateful to my fellow Rhode Islander Philip Smith of the Lao Veterans of America for his determined advocacy on behalf of Hmong and Lao veterans.

Twenty-one years ago, the Clinton administration authorized a plaque to be placed at Arlington National Cemetery commemorating the valor of the Lao soldiers who aided American forces during the Vietnam war. It is a fitting honor for those brave combat veterans that they lie beside old comrades-in-arms, a way of keeping the promise inscribed on this memorial plaque, which pledges that the Hmong and Lao veterans’ “patriotic valor and loyalty in the defense of liberty and democracy will never be forgotten.”

After my father retired, he heard that local opposition had arisen to a proposed Lao temple not far from here in Virginia. He went with his military aide and CIA station chief from the Laos days to testify at the local hearing. The military aide was General Richard Trefry, then the commander of White House military operations, who in full military regalia testified that, without the courageous Lao resistance, led by Vang Pao out of the base at Long Tieng, there would be 1,000 more American names on the Vietnam War Memorial.

It is with that sense of abiding gratitude that we remember the bravery of those Hmong troops and their dedication to fight for democracy and to protect the lives of so many young Americans at war in Southeast Asia.

TRIBUTE TO SHARON JACKSON

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I would like to say a few words about Sharon Jackson, a former member of my staff who recently left to pursue another opportunity in public service.

Sharon was part of the original team in my State offices that I hired after being sworn into the Senate in January 2015.

She served as a constituent relations representative, where her compassion and authenticity reassured constituents as she worked to resolve their issues with various Federal agencies. Being an Army veteran herself, Sharon had a unique gift of connecting with veterans and servicemembers while she helped them navigate complex government systems. The difference she made

in the lives of so many people is immeasurable.

Sharon provided insight into the issues small businesses face in Alaska. Her past work with National Write Your Congressman and the National Federation of Independent Businesses put her in tune with the passions and concerns of Alaska’s small businesses.

She was also a very involved community member in Anchorage and Eagle River, contributing her time and energy to a variety of organizations with the intention of building a better and brighter future for our great State.

Sharon was a true pleasure to have on the team. She loves Alaska, and that always showed in her passionate advocacy on behalf of constituents. She loves her family and is a devoted wife and mother.

We will miss Sharon and the joy she had helping Alaskans. I wish her the best in her future endeavors.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO AMANDA BEDFORD

• Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, this week I have the honor of recognizing Amanda Bedford for her positive impact on the Chouteau County community as the owner of the Wake Cup Cafe.

Amanda grew up on her parent’s farm between Fort Benton and Highwood. She always had a passion for the Fort Benton community, knowing 1 day that was where she wanted to open a coffee shop. At 20 years old and with the support of her parents, she made that dream a reality. Fourteen years later, the business has seen tremendous success and growth under Amanda’s leadership.

What started as a tiny coffee shop, serving only coffee and a few sandwiches, has since expanded greatly. The current building is the restaurant’s third location, with a much larger and more expansive menu. By focusing on fresh, homemade ingredients, Amanda is proud of the delicious food the Wake Cup Cafe brings to Fort Benton.

With the enormous growth the Wake Cup Cafe has seen, Amanda has turned it into a family business. As of 4 years ago, Amanda’s sister and brother-in-law have become part owners in the business, allowing them to continue to grow the coffee shop. While the business continues to expand, Amanda remains focused on providing the community with a place to gather with family and friends. As Amanda says, every small town needs a coffee shop. She is proud to be that staple for the Fort Benton community.

I congratulate Amanda Bedford on her wonderful impact to Fort Benton and the greater Chouteau Community. With her passion, dedication, and determination, her community is brought together over their favorite local hangout: the Wake Cup Cafe.●

TRIBUTE TO DENIS O’HAYER

• Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, today I am proud to honor in the RECORD a dedicated Georgian who has elevated media political coverage and served as a true ambassador of the First Amendment.

It is not every day that a politician honors a journalist on the floor of the Senate, but when one who is as accomplished as Denis O’Hayer of Georgia announces his upcoming retirement, it is only right to recognize his 40 years of radio and TV work and achievements.

Denis O’Hayer will retire next month from Atlanta’s National Public Radio affiliate, WABE, where he has hosted of a number of programs since he joined the station 2009. Since 2015, Denis has gotten the day started for countless Atlantans who tune in for his news updates on “Morning Edition.” The listenership for his program has more than doubled since he took the helm as host. His podcast, “Political Breakfast,” is a more recent hit and shows Denis’s adaptability and one of the many reasons for his success in the field of broadcast journalism.

Denis began his work in the Atlanta media market in 1978 in radio with WGST and as a host with Public Broadcasting Atlanta after moving to the city from his radio career in Connecticut.

During his distinguished career, Denis has also worked in television as a freelance reporter with CNN and as a political reporter at Atlanta NBC affiliate WXIA-TV for 11 years.

The Atlanta Press Club, which is one of the largest and most active professional journalism associations in the country, has benefitted from Denis’s leadership as president.

Denis, his distinguished WABE colleague Rose Scott, and their team earned an Edward R. Murrow award in 2012 for their television broadcast special focused on the fight against child sex trafficking in Atlanta called “How to Stop the Candy Shop.”

The Georgia Association of Broadcasters named Denis Broadcaster of the Year in 2014, and in 2015, he was named to the Atlanta Press Club Hall of Fame.

Denis is respected by colleagues across the spectrum for the quality of his work, his professionalism, and the fact that he is a consummate gentleman. My staff has always praised Denis, and we have looked for ways to work together whenever possible.

Over the years, in addition to politics both local and national, Denis and I forged a friendship and respect for each other that went beyond work, regularly sharing reports about our families and discussing our shared enjoyment of travel.

I wish Denis the very best of luck in his retirement, and I am thankful that he will continue to contribute to Georgia politics as a commentator in the future. Our political discourse will be better for it.●